

MINUTES
UTAH SOIL CONSERVATION COMMISSION (USCC) MEETING

September 2, 2003
Garden City, Utah

ATTENDANCE

Chairman (Standing USCC Ex-officio):

Cary G. Peterson, *Commissioner, Utah Department of Agriculture and Food*

Appointed Soil Conservation District (SCD)

Supervisor USCC Members:

Paul Leishman, *Zone 1*
Dee Waldron, *Zone 2*
Richard L. Saunders, *Zone 3*
Ralph Staheli, *Zone 5*
Willard "Bill" Rasmussen, *Zone 6*
Lyle Bryner, *Zone 7*

Appointed SCD Alternate USCC Members:

S Bruce Karren, *Zone 1*
Wendell Stembridge, *Zone 2*

Standing Ex-Officio USCC Members:

Larry Johnson, *President, Utah Association of Conservation Districts (UACD)*
Sherman Hoskins, *Deputy Director, Utah Dept. Natural Resources*
Dr. Phillip Rasmussen, *UT State University Extension (USU)*
Mike Reichert *for Don Ostler, Water Quality Division, Utah Department of Environmental Quality*

Conservation Partners Representatives:

Phillip "Skip" Nelson, *State Conservationist, National Resource Conservation Service-Utah (NRCS-UT), USDA*
Gordon Younker, *Executive Vice President UACD*

**Conservation Partners Representatives
(Continued):**

Joe Hill, *Chair, State committee, FSA*
Robert Newhall, *Extension/Research Associate, USU*
Penny Trinca, *Zone 1 Coordinator, UACD*
Ken Mills, *Zone 2 Coordinator, UACD*
Ray Loveless, *Zone 3 Coordinator, UACD*
David Pace, *Zone 4 Coordinator, UACD*
Tyce Palmer, *Zone 5 Coordinator, UACD*
Hal Lemon, *Zone 7 Coordinator, UACD*

**Commission Staff Support from the Utah
Department of Agriculture and Food:**

Randy Parker, *Division Director M&CD*
K. N. "Jake" Jacobson, *USCC Admin. Officer, M&CD*
Sherie Edginton, *USCC Secretary, M&CD*
George Hopkin, *Chief Environmental Quality*
Roy Gunnell, *Environmental Scientist*

Guests:

Gary Jann, *Asst. State Conservationist Operations, NRCS-UT*
Karl Kler, *Asst. State Conservationist Programs, NRCS-UT*
Clell Bagley, *USU Extension*
Kevin Creer, *UACD*
Laura Selman, *President, UACD Auxiliary*
Jennifer Hines, *Media Specialist, UACD*
Sylvia Talbot, *Admin Assistant, UACD*
Susan Stillion, *Admin Assistant, UACD*
George S Burbidge, *Director, Weber County Storm WaterDept*
Jack Barnett, *Bear River Commission*

SUMMARY OF COMMISSION ACTIONS

1. The Minutes of the May 21, 2003 USCC meeting approved. Page 2
2. Approval of SCD Out-of-State travel to Annual Regional Meeting in Colorado Springs. Page 4

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 12:59.

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Sherman Hoskins gave Sherie a copy of the May 21 meeting minutes with a few grammatical corrections. **Mr. Sherman Hoskins moved to approve the meeting minutes with the above mentioned changes. Mr. Dee Waldron seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous voice vote.**

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Peterson introduced Mr. S. Bruce Karren as the new Zone 1SCD Supervisor alternate Commission member. Mr. Karren has been a Supervisor in the North Cache SCD for approximately 22 years.

Chairman Peterson invited Commission members and conservation partners to attend the annual Non-point Source (NPS) Water Quality Conference, which started the next day in Garden City. There will be representatives from Utah, Wyoming and Idaho to discuss the inter-state streams of the Bear River Watershed.

Chairman Peterson introduced Mr. Jack Barnett who manages the interstate streams of the Bear River. Mr. Barnett gave some information about Bear Lake water ownership and use. He indicated that current lake water storage levels are at record lows. Lake water users, Pacific Corp and other interests surrounding Bear Lake have an agreement limiting how much water storage will be taken out of the lake.

Chairman Peterson indicated that the FY2005 state budgets are being prepared to present to the Governors office and the legislature. UDAF staff are preparing required forms to submit by due dates.

Chairman Peterson reported that because this is the fifth year of drought, ground water levels are at their lowest levels in recorded history. Many irrigation districts didn't have water for this growing season unless there were reservoirs or deep wells in the area. 75% of agriculture in Utah is livestock related; most of the grazing livestock numbers have been reduced drastically because of shortage of forage and feed. Chairman Peterson suggested that forests and watersheds could be improved by managing vegetative growth. And increased monitoring of water yield with snow-tell sites can help manage the affects of the drought as well as provide historical trend data. We also need to obtain groundwater levels benchmark data, and to discuss how to protect lowering ground water aquifers from overuse. It has been suggested by the State Engineer's office that the legislature establish laws to help enforce water rights of current water users when issuing new well drilling permits so other shallow wells are not dried up or when groundwater is lowered too drastically.

CURRENT ISSUES UPDATE

VISUALIZATION OF DROUGHT CONDITIONS VIA INTERNET NASA SATELLITE UPLINK

Dr. Phil Rasmussen, USU, reported on the USU Interactive Climate and Weather web site. He distributed printed examples of the service. USU is one of 10 universities in the nation that has a satellite dish which down loads climate data hourly from all over the earth. People visiting the web site can narrow their search to individual counties. USU has been partnering with the University of Arizona to help pinpoint vegetation conditions on rangeland in individual counties. One can see at the site current weather information, vegetation conditions and even look at affects & locations of specific storm events. There is an opportunity for a few individuals to receive training on the computer imagery on the web site. Dr. Rasmussen, along with NASA will be holding a training session in October, in Salt Lake City on use of this web site.

Dr. Rasmussen reported on the Climate Center at USU, along with the web site that will help people compile data on drought and water conditions, so they can have better data to go to the government for help during droughts.

POSSIBLE IMPACTS TO UTAH CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP FORM NRCS COMPETITIVE OUT-SOURCING INITEATIVES AND USDA FIELD OFFICE CLOSURE.

Mr. Skip Nelson updated the commission on out-sourcing of employee positions in NRCS-UT, which was required by the Federal Government. Each position will be studied and if it is determined that a private vendor, who has submitted a bid, can do that job for less money, than it must be contracted to the private vendor. In this first round NRCS-UT was mandated to study 7 individual positions. He was pleased to announce that NRCS-UT has retained all of those positions. None will be bid out. Two of NRCS-UT position categories are being studied by NRCS-HQ. These are the State Geologist and Soil Technician positions. These studies will be completed in the next federal fiscal year. There were 879 positions studied in NRCS nationally, 873 were

retained within NRCS. The 3 position categories studied this fiscal year were administrative assistants, soil scientists and soil technicians.

The USDA administration has decided to close 200 field offices nation wide. There are 3 criteria in the closure decision. First, is if an office was included in a 1994 closure study list, but were not closed. Utah doesn't have any offices remaining on the original study that were not closed. The second criterion is that if one office is within a 30 mile or 60 minute drive from another office. And, third if there is only one agency present in that office, or if there were 3 or fewer employees in that office. As of now, no offices in Utah meet these criteria and thus have not been targeted to be closed.

AGRICULTURE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT LOAN (ARDL) PROGRAM

LOAN AND REPAYMENT STATUS UPDATE

Both Mr. Koy Page and Mr. Richard Sandberg were excused from this meeting. The written ARDL Loan Financial report as follows was provided by Mr. Sandberg.

The ARDL program had a good fiscal year, which ended June 30, 2003, with total assets of \$26,200,000 and a net profit of \$365,000 after all expenses and transfers. There were 68 new loans booked during the year totaling \$2,949,000, an average of \$43,000 per loan. TA fees paid to UACD totaled just under \$118,000. During July 4 new loans were booked totaling \$160,000.

As of July 31, 2003 there were 837 loans totaling \$22,768,000 and 116 active applications. There were 13 loans past due 30 days or more, which is 1.55% of the total, with outstanding balances of \$172,483, or .82% of the total outstanding loans. There is one fairly large, well-secured loan in foreclosure, but the borrower has indicated that he will have the funds to bring it current before the scheduling of the trustee's sale. There are several other past due loans for which arrangements for extensions have been made for various reasons, none of which are serious. Credit quality remains very good.

As of August 27, 2003, the fund had \$644,815 in the bank and \$4,036,889 in the investment account, a total of nearly \$4,682,000. ARDL is receiving \$42,905 in sales tax appropriations monthly, however, there will be a quarterly transfer of \$125,000 to Rural Rehab beginning September, and the amount to be transferred to UACD to assist in their funding will also increase. New allocations to the various zones will be considered for approval at the next meeting in November.

USCC, SCD ITEMS

2003 UTAH CONSERVATION FIELD DAY REPORT

Mr. Jake Jacobson reported that the 2003 Utah Conservation Field Day locally sponsored by the Duchesne SCD held in May was well attended and informative. The tour showed Bridging-the-Headgate program type projects. The 2004 Conservation Field Day will be sponsored by the Fremont River SCD of Zone 4. It will be held in late June or July.

SCC/SCD POLICY & LAW CHANGE COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Jake Jacobson reported that at the May USCC meeting a task force was formed to look at potential SCC/SCD policy and law changes. Mr. Richard Saunders was asked to chair it. Mr. Saunders reported that the group had not met yet. One of the issues the task force is to look at is the appropriateness of changing the SCD Supervisor election process so it would become part of general election process. Mr. Saunders had spoken with several SCD Supervisors and the consensus was that none of them wants the election process to change. Mr. Jacobson indicated that if UDAF continues to conduct the elections there will have to be additional help or funds since the cost and workload demands have increased but the revenue has not. He suggested that SCD officials may be asked to volunteer some help with the 2004 election because budget cuts will not allow a temporary employee to be hired to help with the election as in years past.

LEGISLATIVE SURVEY ON USCC FUTURE

Mr. Jake Jacobson reported that the legislature staff had recently sent to Ms. Sherie Edginton, USCC Secretary at UDAF, a survey requesting information on the USCC. It appeared that the survey was to help establish if the USCC should be continued. The USCC office filled out and submitted the survey. A copy of the response was provided for USCC member information. Mr. Jacobson also mentioned that the USCC is currently being audited by the State Auditor's Office.

FY2005 USCC BUDGET REQUEST STATUS THRU UDAF

Mr. Jake Jacobson referred to a handout that described the Governor's FY05 state budget preparation process and guidelines. He read a law quote in the guidelines stating that all budgets, including Boards & Commission, should follow the governor's office budgeting process. He handed out a report showing the USCC's state funding line item's past four fiscal year's expenses and FY2004 budget. It showed that FY03 reflects 2 general fund legislative budget cuts of \$100,500.00 (\$54,200 in August 02 and \$46,300 in December 02). The FY04 general fund budget will be the base for the FY05 budget. He will submit an increase request to UDAF to restore the \$100,500 cuts as decided in the May USCC meeting.

FY04 SCD CONTRACT AMENDMENT STATUS

Mr. Jake Jacobson referenced a report showing the status of the FY04 contract amendments for the SCDs.

SERA FY03 USE REPORT & FY04 RESERVE ALLOTMENTS, APPENDIX

Mr. Jake Jacobson addressed a report showing the FY04 SCD Supervisor Expense Reimbursement Account (SERA) Reserve and FY03 final use. The FY03 final use report will be submitted to the Legislative and Governors fiscal analysts as required in appropriation language. He pointed out a copy of the new SERA procedure appendix sheet showing the decrease in the FY04 SERA reimbursable mileage rate from \$.365 to \$.36, copies of which will be provided to the Zone Coordinators for each SCD. A table showing the FY04 SERA out-of-state funds allocation was referenced. The back listed SCD Supervisors requesting out-of-state SERA authority to use designed FY04 funds for reimbursement of travel to the NACD multi-region & Western Conservation Districts Coalition meeting in Colorado Springs 9/7-10/03. **A motion to approve the travel for Supervisors as listed to attend the Colorado Springs meeting was made by Mr. Paul Leishman and seconded by Mr. Bill Rasmussen. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.**

Mr. Jacobson indicated that the FY04 SERA out-of state travel allocations for SCD Supervisors going to the 2004 NACD convention in Hawaii was included with their SCD's District Operations part of the FY04 contract amendments. Those using SERA funds would still have to be authorized by the USCC per the SERA Policy.

CONSERVATION PARTNERS UPDATE

SCD/ZONE 2 & 7

Zones 2 and 7 handed out a written report showing the achievements and activities of the different districts inside their zones.

UTAH PARTNERS FOR CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORS (UPC&D) COUNCIL

Commission Peterson reported on recent UPC&D Council action. Last Year the Council had formed a technical team to evaluate drought impacts on the most affected rangelands and watersheds, which have made mitigation recommendations. A related technical team reported at the Council's 8/21/03 meeting of the severe plant die off of shrub steppe areas of SE Utah. A technical team was formed to recommend ways to protect the resources in those areas and prevent weed species from taking over. The Council also released the traditional Partnership Action Team (PAT). Mr. Sherman Hoskins added that the PAT team will be replaced with technical teams as issue or projects warrant them.

UTAH ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS (UACD)

Mr. Larry Johnson welcomed Commission members and conservation partners to Rich County, his home county. He announced the hiring of Susan Stillion as the new UACD Executive Assistant who will replace Sylvia Talbot when she retires. Mr. Gordon Younker reported that the 2003 annual UACD convention will be held in St George November 13th and 14th. Convention announcement and registration forms will be coming out soon.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS (NACD)

Mr. Bill Rigby was excused. Mr. Jake Jacobson reported that NACD is going through a major reconstruction process; this will impact the conservation efforts nation wide for years to come. Mr. Rigby has been very involved with this since he is a member of NACD's Executive Board. This reorganization and other current national and regional conservation issues and programs will be discussed at next week's conservation meetings in Colorado Springs.

UTAH DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD (UDAF) – MARKETING & CONSERVATION DIVISION

Mr. Randy Parker handed out a report on the milestones reported by the Marketing and Conservation Division that are part of UDAF's report on progress towards the Governor's 1000 Day Plan. Water quality was included with the report. Ground water monitoring programs has tested 1955 rural water samples. 75% of those wells tested were culinary water. The AFO/CAFO assessment is coming to a close, there were 387 potential CAFOs identified by the end of July. The money received for the Parroell Salinity Program helps with salinity removal out of the Colorado River. There has been sprinkler systems put into place on 7800 acres in the Uintah Basin, and the removal of salt from the Colorado River is 32,800 tons over twenty years. Utah will be recommended for \$1.25 million dollars and the department is looking for new areas to place sprinkler systems on. In the last legislative session, funding for the Market News program was cut. Mr. Parker has been able to find funds to run the program until February 2004, which will give the department time to go back to the legislature and ask for more funding. The Division's marketing specialist is working on a program called Living Utah, which markets Utah beef to help the cattle industry. In the international markets, Utah was approved to head promotional projects in Korea and Hong Kong. The U.S.D.A. Secretary has decided to open the Canadian borders of specific types of beef. The animals must be under 30 months of age, and the beef can not be de-boned or associated with the nervous system in any way.

USDA FARM SERVICE AGENCY (FSA)

Mr. Joe Hill reported that the FSA have paid out \$37million in drought aid to Utah's farmers and cattle producers. The Livestock assistance program was opened the first of August. There will probably be more than \$250 million in applications. Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) grazing has been authorized in San Juan, Box Elder and Cache counties. These areas will be grazed for 90 days. There is still some unallocated non-fat dry milk available for cattle producers. The UDAF is mainly handling the distribution of the dry milk.

TIMELY OR URGENT ITEMS FROM OTHER PARTNERS

Mr. Kevin Creer, UACD, reported on the Utah Bridging-the-Headgate conservation workshops that will be held around the state. There are workshops planned for Cache and Weber counties.

Mr. George Burbidge, Weber County Storm Water Director, reported that the Waste Water plan has been finished. In March of 2004 all MS4 storm water program cities on the Wasatch front and Washington County must be permitted.

OTHER ITEMS

Mr. Jake Jacobson reported on two conservation awards that will be given out at the annual UACD meeting. One is the USCC's Graham Quate award; those applications will be due September 26. The other is the Forest Stewardship award given by UDNR Forestry, Fire and State Lands Division.

CALENDAR OF FUTURE EVENTS

Next two SCC meetings: Nov 12 St. George & Jan 2004 – details to be determined by SCC in Nov mtg.
2003 NPS conference – Sept 3-5 in Garden City, Rich County
2003 NACD SW & Pacific Combined Regional Meeting & 4th Annual Western Conservation District Meeting: Sept 7-10, 2003 in Colorado Springs CO
2003 Nat'l Assoc. State Conservation Agencies Annual Meeting: Sept 10-12 Co Springs CO
2003 Annual UACD Convention: Nov 13-14 at St. George

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 P.M.

Sherie Edginton, Soil Conservation Program Secretary

K.N. “Jake” Jacobson, USCC Administrative Officer